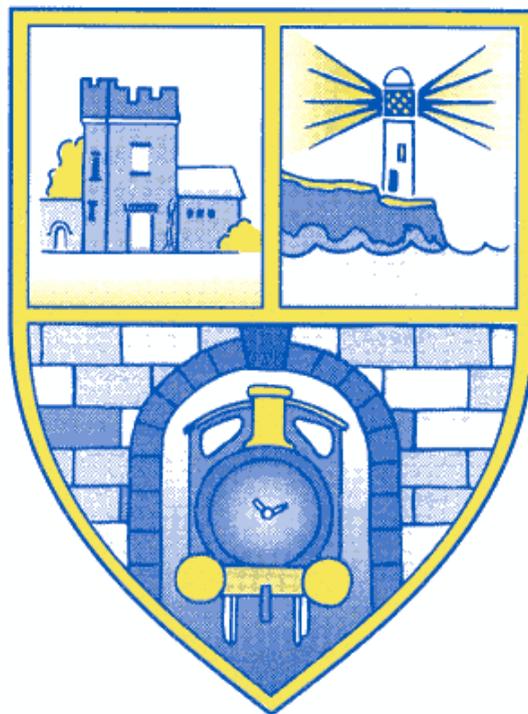


# Whitehead Primary School and Nursery Unit

*“Learning & Growing Together”*



## Attendance Policy

In Whitehead Primary School we aim to provide, in partnership with parents, a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment where children can achieve their full potential and pursue excellence. We believe that high levels of attendance and punctuality are vital components in helping pupils to have full access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum enabling them to achieve their full potential and pursue excellence.

In Whitehead Primary School we strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

### **Rationale**

- To improve the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Whitehead Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to establish good patterns of punctuality and attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to ensure their children are at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- To keep parents/carers informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage children to be independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources and/or equipment.
- To develop a positive reward system that encourages good pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise closely with the Educational Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.

### **Good Attendance and Punctuality**

Good attendance and punctuality are vital components in facilitating opportunities for the children to:

- Learn.
- Have fun.
- Make new friends.
- Experience new things in life.
- Develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- Achieve their full potential.
- Develop new skills.
- Build confidence and self-esteem.
- Develop the confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others.
- Develop good habits that will last throughout their lives.
- Have the best possible start in life.

**Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in their education and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.**

## **Role of the School**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal**

- The Principal is responsible for managing pupil attendance.
- To organise incentives to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To analyse attendance trends and to correspond with parents/carers/pupils if a problem is identified.
- To provide guidance and support to parents/carers who are having difficulty getting their child to attend school each day.
- To distribute the Miss School = Miss Out leaflet to all parents/carers at the beginning of each year to remind them of the importance of having a good pattern of attendance (See Appendix 1).
- To send an initial letter (Appendix 2) to parents/carers of children whose attendance has dropped below 90%.
- To send a further letter to parents/carers of children whose attendance isn't showing any improvement (Appendix 3).
- To complete a referral to the EWO if pupil attendance falls below 85% with no acceptable explanation.
- Provide an attendance figure on each school report in June.
- Provide an annual attendance figure for the whole school to be included in the annual school report.
- To ensure that pupil attendance is an item on the agenda at each Governors' meeting.
- Monitor punctuality and send a letter to parents/carers of any children who have been late five or more times over the course of a half term (Appendix 4).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors**

- To ensure that pupil attendance is an item on the agenda at every meeting.
- To support the Principal in the outworking of the Attendance Policy.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers**

Class teachers have an important role to play in managing attendance by marking the attendance register each day, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns. Teachers can speak to pupils about their attendance and to parents about their child's attendance. Teachers will discuss each child's attendance at the parent/teacher consultation in February. Each child's attendance will be recorded on the consultation record. They will also promote class attendance through curriculum activities.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers**

- Contact the school by telephone on the first morning of the absence and inform the school the reason for and expected length of the absence.
- Keep the school informed if the absence is going to be more prolonged than initially anticipated.
- To provide the teacher with a written explanation for the absence on return to school.
- To arrange medical/dental appointments where possible outside school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school hours a written explanation must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. If a child attends an appointment during school hours a present mark is awarded providing the child returns to school for the remainder of the day.
- To inform the Principal if a pupil is reluctant to attend so that we can support you and the child.
- To avoid arranging holidays during term time. Parents are furnished with details of the school holidays at the beginning of the school year. The school discourages parents from taking children on holiday during term due to the impact on pupils' learning. Parents/Carers must contact the school prior to booking any holiday to explain the need to remove a pupil from school during term time. The contact should be in the form of a letter addressed to the Principal. Any holidays in term time are considered unauthorised absences. Children will not be given work by their teacher to complete during the holiday absence.
- To ensure that children are punctual (in school by 8.55 am). Full attendance involves being present the entire school day. A record is kept of all late arrivals. If a child goes home in the morning due to illness he/she will be marked absent for the afternoon session.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils**

It is the responsibility of pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Be organised and ready for work.
- Inform the teacher about any problem that may prevent them from attending school regularly and on time.
- Supply a written note to explain any absence when they return to school.

## **Procedures to Record Attendance and Punctuality**

### **Arrival and Registration**

- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.45 am as there is no supervision available before this time.
- The bell will ring at 8.55 am when children will line up and, accompanied by their teacher, proceed to their classroom.
- Registration is taken at 9.00 am by the class teacher. Any child who arrives after 9.00 am will be marked as late.

### **Categorising Absence**

#### **Authorised Absence**

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Taking part in a religious event
- Exceptional family circumstances (eg wedding or funeral)
- Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event, eg sport, music, etc.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

- Birthdays
- Visiting relatives
- Looking after other members of the family
- A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school
- Shopping
- Family holiday/long weekend break
- No written reason provided on return to school after absence.

### **Monitoring Absence**

- Each half term an audit is printed out from SIMS which identifies pupils whose attendance is showing signs of concern (under 90%).
- Class teachers are made aware of attendance percentages and a letter will be sent home from the Principal.

### **Monitoring Lateness**

- If a pupil has been recorded as coming late to school on five or more occasions over a half term a letter will be sent to the parent/carer from the Principal.
- If there is no improvement the Principal will contact the parent/carer and request a person-to-person meeting to discuss the issue of punctuality.

### **Educational Welfare Service**

The Education Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The Principal will speak to the parents informing that a referral will be made.

### **Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality**

- Children with 100% attendance in a half term will receive an attendance sticker from their teacher.
- Children with 100% attendance over a full year will receive a medal at the end of year assembly.
- Any child with full attendance over seven years will receive a book token and a trophy.

### **Monitoring of the Policy**

The Principal, in conjunction with the staff and governors will review the policy every two years. The policy will be available on the school website.

**Reviewed by:            Jim Loughins**

**Last reviewed:        August 2018**

**Next review:         August 2019**

## Whitehead Primary & Nursery Unit



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Website: [www.whiteheadps.com](http://www.whiteheadps.com)  
Principal: Mr J. Loughins BEd MEd PQH(NI)

Dear Parent

In Whitehead Primary School we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality. It is now school policy to inform parents if their child's attendance falls below 90%.

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ attendance was at \_\_\_\_\_.

The Educational Welfare Service requests details of pupils whose attendance falls below 85%.

I understand there may be a genuine reason for his/her absence from school, however, I trust you will ensure your child's school attendance is a priority.

Regards

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**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal

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Dear Parent

In Whitehead Primary School we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality.

As of \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ attendance is at \_\_\_\_\_.

As there is no improvement in attendance I would like to remind you that, should it slip below 85%, I will be obliged to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Regards

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**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal

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Dear Parent

In Whitehead Primary School we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality.

It is now school policy for parents to be notified if a child has more than five late arrivals over each half term.

\_\_\_\_\_ has been late for school on \_\_\_\_\_ occasions over the last half term.

A late arrival is disruptive for both the child who has arrived late and the remainder of the class.

With this in mind, I ask you to ensure that \_\_\_\_\_ arrives at school by 8.55 am each day.

Regards

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**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal